



the collegian GAMEDAY GUIDE

friday, august 29, 2013

K-STATE VS. NORTH DAKOTA STATE



Powercat Profile: 4
LB Tre Walker



See how K-State and NDSU's units stack up 5



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By the numbers

Adam Suderman
staff writer

11.5

Points per game by North Dakota State's opponents during the 2012-2013 season
Of their 15 opponents, the Bison held seven of them to less than 10 points. With nine defensive starters returning, the back-to-back NCAA FCS national champions will likely have another stout defense. The Bison also ranked first in total defense at the FCS level, limiting opponents to just over 234 yards per game.

8

Number of years North Dakota State head coach Craig Bohl spent at Nebraska as a line-backers coach and defensive coordinator
Bohl served on the staff of former Nebraska head coach Frank Solich and will likely have a strong working knowledge of K-State head coach Bill Snyder's tendencies. Throughout Bohl's tenure at Nebraska, the games between the Cornhuskers and the Wildcats are some of the biggest in K-State history.

203

The number of consecutive games in which K-State has scored at least once.
The last time the Wildcats were scoreless was on November 16, 1996 against Colorado. The 12-0 victory for the Buffaloes now sits at the beginning of one of the nation's longest streaks of not being shutout. The stretch ranks eighth-longest in the nation as well as second-longest in the Big 12.

97

Winning percentage when K-State has led at halftime since 1990.
Very few teams have been as dominant as the Wildcats in finishing games. The Wildcats have won 159 of their last 164 games when having the lead at the break. K-State also tallied a 10-0 record last season when holding a halftime lead.

75 million

How much the new West Stadium Center construction cost.
Over the summer, Manhattan residents have noticed the new stadium rising up quickly. Now on Friday, 50,000 fans will pour into what is basically a brand new Bill Snyder Family Stadium. There's a new hall of honor, team shop and even a statue out front.

Wildcats vs. Bison



Linebacker Tre Walker (No. 50) leads the K-State Wildcats out onto the field. Walker is set to return to the field on Friday after suffering a season-ending injury against Texas Tech in 2012.

Sean Frye
sports editor

Coming off an 11-2 season that saw the Big 12 title trophy come to Manhattan for just the second time in program history, the K-State Wildcats kicks off the 2013 season against the two-time defending FCS champion North Dakota State Bison.
Last season, the Bison went 14-1 overall, including the FCS playoffs, en route to an FCS national title. So while the Bison is an FCS foe, the Wildcats know they can't take their season-opener lightly.
"We have really just been preparing the same way we would prepare for any other team," Tyler Lockett, preseason All-Big 12 junior wide receiver, said. "Watching film and listening to the things our coaches have been saying because they have a lot of great players."
The biggest players to look out for on the Bison lie on the offensive side of the ball. The Bison had two running backs, senior Sam Ojuri and junior John Crockett, gain 1,059 yards on the ground. Starting senior quarterback Brock Jensen is also entering his fourth year as the signal-caller.
"They have guys that are

All-Americans," Lockett said. "So you have to take teams seriously because you have no idea what can happen in any game."
For the Wildcats, the biggest storyline going in is junior quarterback Jake Waters winning the starting job over red-shirt sophomore Daniel Sams.
"Jake is an extremely hard worker," B.J. Finney, junior center, said. "He analyzes everything, he knows where he has to be and what he has to do. He steps up to do the best job that he can, and if he does make a mistake, then he is trying to learn from it as soon as it happens."
Finney said at Tuesday's weekly press conference that having Waters on campus during the last spring semester helped his development into Collin Klein's replacement.
"I think it helped Jake tremendously to get to know the system," Finney said. "(To) be able to know the play calls and just know what was expected of him early on instead of coming in over the summer or even right at the beginning of camp like some guys."
Waters will have plenty of weapons to rely on in his first career NCAA start in senior running back John Hubert as well as wide receivers Lockett

and senior Tramaine Thompson.
But one of the up-and-coming receivers that could have a big impact early and often for the Wildcats this season is junior Curry Sexton. Head coach Bill Snyder named Sexton the third-starting receiver after an impressive fall camp.
"He put himself in position to be the third guy," Snyder said. "He runs routes extremely well, catches the ball well and is an aggressive player. He is a good blocker as well as a receiver."
Another player that could have a breakout year is red-shirt freshman fullback Glenn Gronkowski, the little brother of superstar New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski. Glenn Gronkowski was named the starting fullback for this year, replacing Braden Wilson, who was drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs this offseason.
"Being under Braden Wilson was huge, how much he taught me, so I think that helped a lot being able to learn from him," Gronkowski said. "When I learned I was a starting, it was exciting. I have been waiting for this for a long time and been working hard for it, so it meant a lot."
Friday night's game will

also be the debut of the new West Stadium Center, a \$75 million reconstruction project to Bill Snyder Family Stadium this offseason.
"I was here last year for the Texas-Kansas State game," Big 12 commissioner Bob Bowlsby said at K-State media days. "And to see all the purple in the stands and to see the new stadium, full venue, all of the anticipation of the Westside Center and all of the things going on, it was really remarkable."
Overall, the theme for the Wildcats in this game is making sure they don't overlook the Bison. Appalachian State was the last FCS team to win three-straight FCS titles. At the start of its third championship season in 2007, the team upset then No. 5 Michigan in one of the greatest college football upsets in history.
That's where North Dakota State stands right now. But the Wildcats are determined to not be the same kind of footnote that Michigan became in that 2007 upset.
"Everyone that played them last year, we heard them say they are the toughest team they played all year," Gronkowski said. "Obviously, winning back-to-back championships, that is huge. We can't go in there and take them lightly."

Under the lights



K-State wide receiver Tyler Lockett nabs a touchdown catch in Morgantown, W. Va. against the West Virginia Mountaineers last season. Lockett was voted by the Big 12 media as a preseason All-Big 12 kick returner.

Who will win: K-State or North Dakota State?

Guest columnist: Sam Herder, sports editor, NDSU Spectrum

Sean: There's no way that an FCS team is going to waltz into Manhattan, to a packed Bill Snyder Family Stadium, and take a win from the reigning Big 12 champions. Last year the Wildcats beat Missouri State, their yearly FCS tune-up game, 51-9, a 42-point difference. What makes you think that North Dakota State can compete against a team that won a BCS conference just one season ago and went to the Fiesta Bowl?



Sam Herder

Sean: You want to talk about NFL talent? The Wildcats have senior safety Ty Zimmerman and senior offensive tackle Cornelius Lucas, both projected draft picks according to NFLDraftScout.com. K-State also have senior running back John Hubert, the Big 12's third-leading returning rusher. The biggest concern for the Bison has to be the Wildcats' offensive line. That unit returns five guys with starting experience and is one of the best, not just in the Big 12, but in the nation. How does the defense from North Dakota State plan to control the tempo of the game if K-State can dominate the trenches?



Sean: It may be true that the Wildcats lost nine defensive starters from last season's team that won the Big 12. But you're forgetting that there's still senior linebacker Tre Walker and safety Ty Zimmerman, two of the best playmakers in the entire league. There's also senior linebacker Blake Slaughter, who was a starter in 2010 but redshirted last season in order to be able to play this year. And time of possession? Bill Snyder's forte is controlling the pace of the game. In fact, the only times the Wildcats lost last year was when he couldn't against Baylor or Oregon. But against all the no-huddle teams in the Big 12, Snyder found a way to shut them down.



Sean: Ultimately these two teams are very similar. But at the end of the day the Wildcats have tons of playmakers, including running back John Hubert and even junior Jake Waters, the new starting quarterback. Waters broke countless NJCAA passing records at the junior college level and could be one of the biggest surprises in the entire country. The K-State fans are a rabid bunch, so the Bison will also have to deal with that added factor. At the end of the day, the Wildcats will be just too much for the Bison. Sure, the Bison's senior class is 3-0 against FBS teams, but those wins came against KU, Minnesota and Colorado State. None of those teams are on the level of K-State and you'll find that out on Friday.



Sam: Your first statement that the Bison cannot win because they are an FCS school is the case in point that the Bison's subdivision lacks respect. Many fail to realize that the top FCS teams are better than the lower tier FBS programs. That's not saying K-State is one of those lower teams, but the Bison were well deserved to be ranked a top 30-35 team last year. And with 18 returning starters, this Bison roster is loaded. Loaded with FBS talent and a few NFL draft prospects. North Dakota State is miles ahead of Missouri State, who finished eighth in the same conference as the Bison.



Sean Frye



Sam: Bison head coach Craig Bohl did state the Wildcat's offensive line is his main concern. But the Bison's defense is their strong-point and as sound of a defense as there is. Last year, the Bison only allowed 11.5 points per game and only 93.9 yards rushing per game. Granted, those numbers were against FCS teams but is still impressive nonetheless. Beating the Bison with the run game is a bold strategy, no matter what level your team is. The North Dakota State offense has a strong running game also, with two 1,000 yard rushers that like to eat up time of possession against an unproven Wildcat defense that loses almost every starter.



Sam: I think we both agree this will be a slow game. Coach Bohl's West Coast offense is geared to establish the run game and keep the clock churning. North Dakota State has dominated time of possession, averaging just over 34 minutes a game last year with that number being hiked up in their playoff run. The Bison were outstanding in third-down conversions as well, converting on 51 percent of them. This offense isn't going to wow anyone, but if the Wildcats give the Bison several third-and-5 or shorter situations, their defense may not be able to get off the field. And with fourth-year starting senior quarterback Brock Jensen, the Bison are not a team that loses the turnover battle very often.



Sam: The Bison are going for a three-peat at a national championship. The last FCS school to accomplish that feat was Appalachian State, who beat No. 5 Michigan in 2007 to open their final of the three championship seasons. This North Dakota State team may be just as talented overall as that Appalachian State team. The Bison are no strangers to rabid fan bases. The Fargodome has exceeded 130 decibels several times when the Bison defense is on the field. This veteran group's performance won't be swayed by an intense crowd. And don't be surprised to see more yellow in the crowd than expected on Friday night. This will be a one-possession game that may be decided with whoever gets the better bounce of the ball. And in the last two years, the Bison have always put themselves in a position to have the ball bounce their way.

Andre McDonald given fresh start, needs trust

Sean Frye
sports editor

K-State Wildcats tight end Andre McDonald is an extremely imposing figure. The senior from Choctaw, Okla. is 6-foot-8-inch and 278 pounds.

At times throughout his career, McDonald has shown to be one of the most promising tight ends in the Big 12. In the 2012 Cotton Bowl against Arkansas, it was his jumping touchdown grab that put the Wildcats "back in business," as Gus Johnson said over the air.

But the reason McDonald hasn't had the career that he could've up to this point has been because of off-the-field issues.

In 2011, McDonald was cited with domestic battery and possession of alcohol by a minor, for which he was put on probation. A year later, he was jailed for five days for violating his probation after being convicted of a violation of Manhattan's dangerous dog ordinance.

Later, according to numerous reports, McDonald was sued by a Manhattan resident for \$60,000 as a result of injuries allegedly sustained when pit bulls owned by McDonald bit him.

"We have to get him some friends, other than dogs," head coach Bill Snyder said in a press conference last season. "We're working diligently on that. He has suffered some consequences and continues to suffer some consequences."

In 2013 though, McDonald is starting out on fresh ground and hoping to have a big impact for the Wildcats offense.

"He's been given an opportunity for sure," K-State co-offensive coordinator Dana Dimel said. "And he needs to make sure that he stays consistent with his opportunity. To me that's the big word with Andre is consistency. Upside in his playmaking ability is tremendous if he plays with consistency and handles himself with consistency on and off the field."

At the start of training camp, Snyder said that McDonald had come in more committed to the team than he ever had during his checkered career with the Wildcats.

"He's taken strides," Snyder said. "I've seen him be as conscience as he has been at any time. He's more coachable than he's been at any time, seemingly more committed is probably as good a word to say."

One of the goals for McDonald has been to earn the trust of his teammates.

"He's building trust. I believe in him, but he's

got to build a trust with all of his teammates too," Dimel said. "That's what he's working on, and he's got to do it day in and day out."

Junior center B.J. Finney says he's noticed the changes that McDonald has made in life.

"I know Andre has changed," Finney said. "Andre has been given an opportunity and he is going to make the most of it. He's kind of had the realization point where it's like 'okay, I took this for granted and now I can't.'"

Finney says that McDonald is one of the funnier guys on the team and is a welcome presence in the locker room and on the field.

"He's a great guy, pretty funny, brings great humor to the team, just kind of lightens the mood," Finney said.

Being a senior means McDonald has just one year to make up for the ground he's lost while dealing with off-the-field drama.

"It's just my last year, so I'm really trying to go out on a good leg," McDonald said. "I'm just out here working as hard as I can so maybe I can leave a legacy behind. I've done a couple of good things but nothing great."

Moving past the college boy mentality and maturing into an adult is what has made a big difference in his life both on the field and off it, says the tight end.

"I've been staying out of the bad things that have happened," McDonald said. "I feel like it's time to step up and become an adult and not so much a young kid. I'm ready to play some football and be a leader."

McDonald's past has certainly been turbulent to say the least. And the Wildcats have missed him on the field.

In the spring game last April, McDonald showed fans what they've been missing. He caught eight passes for 80 yards and proved to be a consistent target for both Jake Waters and Daniel Sams, who were at the time battling it out for the starting quarterback job.

"We'd sure like for him to do what he did in the spring game and catch eight balls and have games like that," Dimel said. "He's a hard guy, once he gets moving downfield to bring down."

Ultimately though, McDonald is just ready to prove that he can leave a positive mark at K-State.

"I was always confident I could contribute, I just didn't always prove it," McDonald said. "I feel like this will be another year to step out and contribute again. It feels really good to be able to do that."

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Powercat Profile: Tre Walker ready to go to work



Emily DeShazer | Collegian

Senior linebacker Tre Walker hasn't played since injuring his knee in Week 8 last season against Texas Tech, but the natural leader is eager to get back on the field and take control of a young defense.

John Zetmeir
staff writer

For senior linebacker Tre Walker, being a leader has always come naturally. He has always been the one to pick up a teammate or motivate them to get to a level they did not think was possible. But for the first time in his life, he felt like the shoe was on the other foot. He needed to hear that motivation he normally delivers from someone else.

Last season, Walker suffered a knee injury that sidelined him for the remaining five games of the season, two of which the Wildcats lost. K-State had a plethora of talented linebackers in 2012, so Walker was used in a reserved role. The then-junior had only 19 tackles in his shortened season.

In his first year as a Wildcat, Walker made an immediate impact as a true freshman. He recorded 47 tackles and was

named a freshman All-American. His former high school football coach at Olathe North, Pete Flood, said he was not at all surprised to see him play as a true freshman.

"When kids go away to school, and especially to a Division I school, to get on the field as a freshman is a huge accomplishment," Flood said. "His ability to compete, that's what got him out on the field. He's got a great motor in terms of playing at a high level of intensity on a per-snap basis."

Walker wasted no time in getting his name back into the headlines in his sophomore year. In week three against Miami, Walker made three consecutive goal line tackles, including the game winning tackle, against the Hurricanes.

"The play against Miami was unbelievable, but Tre has always had a pretty good nose for the football," Flood said. "He's always

had that sense of getting to the ball, especially on the defensive side."

Finishing his sophomore year with 52 tackles, Walker seemed primed to continue his success for his junior season as part of a very talented linebacking core.

Last year, the Wildcats were 8-0, ranked No. 3 in the country and coming off of a big win on the road against Big 12 newcomer West Virginia when, near the end of the third quarter against then-No. 14 Texas Tech, Walker went down with what he initially thought was a minor injury. It wasn't until he tried to walk off the field that he realized that he could not do so on his own. A player who did everything he could to fire up his team and who tried to be a leader on and off the field realized that he would only be able to lead from the sidelines for the rest of the year.

With advances in medicine

and training in today's world, players are healing faster and even becoming better than they were pre-injury. However, getting over an injury is not just a physical challenge, but it can also take a toll on an athletes mental game.

"I know Tre has worked really hard in his rehab," Flood, who is now the sports psychology teacher at Olathe North, said. "The recovery from (surgeries) is just amazing. So the biggest thing for him is getting out there, going 100 percent, making that cut, making that hit. Understand that it is going to be alright and then once that process has happened, he'll be right back to it."

During the spring season, Walker was back practicing with the team after being ahead of

schedule with his surgery. However, coaches felt like it was a safe idea to leave him out of the 2013 spring game.

"It has definitely been an uphill grind and an uphill battle. I've never had to deal with something like this," Walker said in the spring. "I'm just trying to stay positive and keep myself motivated. My dad told me all the time that 'sometimes the motivator needs to be motivated.'"

Walker has been going through full practices this fall and is expected to play on Friday, as he is currently listed on the depth chart as the starting strong side linebacker. Not only does he face the task of returning to game speed, but also helping some new faces fill in on the defensive side of the ball. There have been

a lot of questions about this defense, but Walker has nothing but confidence in his squad.

"We are going to be just fine. We've been going back to the drawing board and we are just going to do what we do to get back to where we need to be," Walker said.

Whether it is a former high school teammate or a current coach, everyone will tell you that Tre Walker is famous for the motto "let's go to work." Walker has not played an official down of football in nearly 10 months but said he believes that he will be ready to go to work this season.

"Since my injury I was just fired up to get back to practice," Walker said. "I can't wait to get out there and finally play again."

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Heisman Watch: 7 players to watch this season



Even without a single snap played this season an array of players, mostly across the power conferences, have been tabbed as Heisman hopefuls by a variety of media sources.

There are the typical positions, quarterback and running back, that make up 19 of the past 20 Heisman winners. Dominating the list while a few rare positions, wide receiver and a defensive end, that are being mentioned as well.

So here are seven players, in no particular order, to look for come December. Remember, I reserve the right to change my mind on a weekly basis.

1. Braxton Miller (QB, Ohio State) - Miller finished fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting

last season after leading his bowl-banned Buckeyes to a 12-0 record. He became a true dual threat in his second season as a starting quarterback, adding more than 70 yards per game to his passing attack and a little more than 45 yards per game to his rushing impact. Heading into his second season under head coach Urban Meyer, who coached Heisman winning Tim Tebow in 2007, Miller is poised for a run to New York if the Buckeyes can roll through the Big 10 again. Possible missteps could be a week three road test against California and a road game against rival Michigan for the last regular season game.

2. Teddy Bridgewater (QB, Louisville) - One thing Bridgewater has going for him is his momentum from last season. The Big East Offensive Player of the Year last season led his Cardinals to a nationally televised Sugar Bowl win over the No. 3 Florida Gators, completing 20-of-32 for 266 yards and two touchdowns. One thing going against Bridgewater is that one loss in

the recently renamed American Athletic Conference (AAC) could end any flight plans to New York for the talented junior.

3. De'Anthony Thomas (RB, Oregon) - A dual threat out of the backfield returning for his junior campaign with other key Ducks' skill players such as sophomore quarterback Marcus Mariota and senior wide receiver Josh Huff. Thomas, who anchored his 4x100 relay team to the sixth fastest time in Oregon history last year, is thought of as one of the fastest players in college football. K-State became a victim of Thomas' speed in the Fiesta Bowl when he took the opening kickoff back 94 yards for a touchdown in Oregon's 35-17 win over the Wildcats. A few possible roadblocks for Thomas getting to New York in December include the other collection of threats on Oregon's fast-paced offense and a road matchup with Stanford, who handed the Ducks their only loss last season.

4. Johnny Manziel (QB, Texas A&M) - If Manziel can leave

all of the controversy that filled the reigning Heisman Trophy winner's offseason off the field, then Manziel will have a chance to be the second repeat Heisman winner - Archie Griffin won back-to-back in 1974-1975 for Ohio State. Fortunately, Manziel plays under quarterback guru Kevin Sumlin, who coached passing sensation Case Keenum at Houston. The Aggies' schedule is favorable - for an SEC schedule, that is - as they avoid games against Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. But a third week Alabama clash could be Manziel's make-or-break chance at a second Heisman Trophy.

5. A.J. McCarron (QB, Alabama) - What better way to wrap up a nearly flawless career than a Heisman Trophy for the guy dating a model? McCarron enters this season with a 24-2 record as a starter for Alabama. His Rolling Tide are ranked No. 1 entering the season as he tries to lead them to the program's third straight BCS National Championship and its fourth in five years. Last season, McCarron led

the nation in passing efficiency (173.08) and threw a school record 26 touchdowns.

6. Tajh Boyd (QB, Clemson) - After a breakout season that included 3,896 passing yards and an ACC-record 36 touchdown against 13 interceptions to go along with 514 rushing yards, Boyd and the No. 8 Tigers are set up for a run at the ACC title. A season-opening matchup with Georgia could go a long way in determining Boyd's Heisman fate.

7. Jadeveon Clowney (DE, South Carolina) - Nearly a lock for the No. 1 pick in the 2014 NFL draft, Clowney is still a historical long shot to win the Heisman Trophy. The last defensive player to receive the honor was Charles Woodson, a defensive back and return man for Michigan in 1997.

Corbin McGuire is an senior in mass communication. Please send all comments to sports@k-statecollegian.com.

Collegian Staff Pick ‘em

Members of the Collegian staff pick their winners in the games of the week:

K-State vs. North Dakota State
Friday, 7:30 p.m. CT
No. 5 Georgia vs. No. 8 Clemson
Saturday, 7:00 p.m. CT
No. 12 LSU vs. No. 20 TCU
Saturday, 8:00 p.m. CT
Miss. State vs. No. 13 Oklahoma State
Saturday, 2:30 p.m. CT
No. 1 Alabama vs. Virginia Tech
Saturday, 4:30 p.m. CT
Louisiana-Lafayette vs. Arkansas
Saturday, 3:00 p.m. CT



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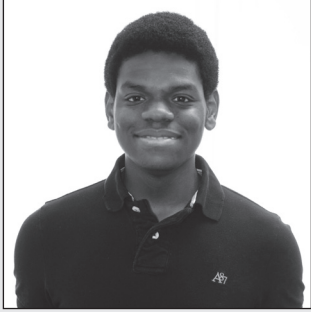
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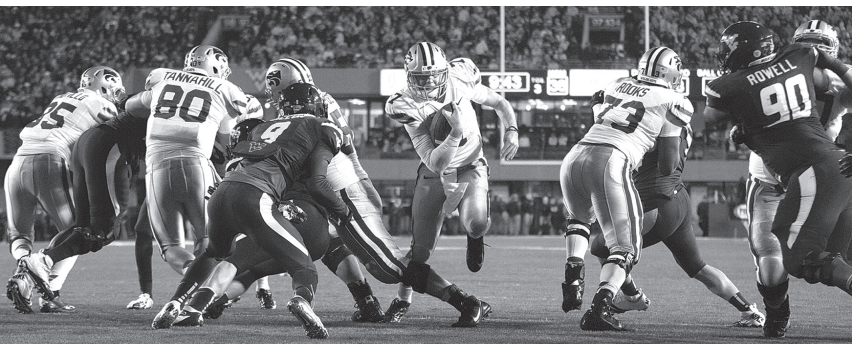
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Comparing Positions: North Dakota State vs. K-State



North Dakota State Bison senior running back Sam Ojuri.



Then-junior running back John Hubert runs the ball against KU on October 31, 2012. Hubert is the Big 12's third-leading returning rusher in 2013.



CB Marcus Williams vs. S Ty Zimmerman

The Wildcat faithful should be more than familiar with senior Ty Zimmerman at this point. As one of two returning starters on the defense, and a three-year starter at that, Zimmerman is the face of the K-State defense. His presence is felt all over the field, as he made clear last season with 50 tackles and five interceptions. Four of those five picks came in consecutive games, and he tied for the Big 12 lead in that category despite missing two games at the end of the season.

Marcus Williams is a name that few people in Manhattan

are bound to know, but that could change tonight. Williams is the Zimmerman of the Bison defense. Both play in the secondary and both are one of, if not the best player on their respective defenses. The 5-11, 192 pound senior from Minneapolis was a consensus All-American, national Defensive Player of the Year last season in D1-AA. Williams intercepted seven passes last season and deflected another 11, making him one of the best cover corners in D-II and will be in the back of K-State junior quarterback Jake Waters' mind all game.

Edge: Zimmerman. While Williams is probably the better of the two when it comes to pass coverage, Zimmerman's largest impact may be in the running game, where the strength of the Bison offense resides.

RBs Sam Ojuri and John Crockett vs. RB John Hubert
Senior John Hubert has

put together two straight seasons with over 900 yards rushing, both while being the second-leading rusher on the team. Without Collin Klein around, Hubert will be the featured rusher for the Wildcats and will be challenged by the Bison defense. As he strives for his first 1,000-yard season, this game will show us how he handles being "The Guy" for the Wildcat offense.

Sam Ojuri and John Crockett are returning to North Dakota State after both having 1000-yard seasons last year. Senior Ojuri racked up 1047 yards and 12 touchdowns, averaging 4.9 yards per rush, while junior Crockett finished with 1038 yards and 9 touchdowns while averaging 5.4 yards per rush. Between the two, both of which stand at six feet tall and just over 200 pounds, the overhauled Wildcat defense will have their hands full.

Edge: Ojuri and Crockett. While I have every confidence that Hubert will be everything we want and more this season,

two 1000-yard rushers are hard to say no to, even against lesser competition.

Bison DL vs. Wildcat DL

K-State has plenty of fresh faces along the line, which is not the most ideal, but head coach Bill Snyder has done more with less before. Ryan Mueller and Marquel Bryant will start at end, while Chaquil Reed and Travis Britz will start inside at tackle. Mueller, a junior, appeared in all 13 games last season, finishing with 14 tackles and two sacks, while his sophomore counterpart, Bryant, recorded three tackles in five games. Reed notched one tackle in four games last year after transferring to K-State from Butler, but has formidable size at 6-3, 309 pounds. Britz is also big, 6-4, 293 pounds, and totaled six tackles in 11 games as a sophomore last year. This group is raw, but has promise.

Where the Wildcat front four lacks experience, the Bisons' has it in droves. On one end is senior defensive end Cole

Jirik, coming in at 6-5, 248 pounds. As a junior last season, he piled up seven and a half sacks and 13.5 tackles for loss, while adding 10 quarterback hits. Across from him is fellow senior Kyle Emanuel. The 6-3, 246 pound junior appeared in every game last year but only started 10 games, totaling five sacks and 12 tackles for loss. K-State will catch a break in defensive tackle Leevon Perry's suspension for the game, but the Bison have surprising depth for a D1-AA team, and the drop off will not be huge.

Edge: North Dakota State. K-State's defensive line will have to prove that they can play, while their Bison counterparts have already done so.

WR Ryan Smith vs. WR Tyler Lockett

In 12 games, senior Ryan Smith caught 49 passes for 549 yards and three touchdowns last season, while averaging 10.5 yards per punt return, including a 76 yarder for a touchdown against Youngstown

State. In 13 games, junior Tyler Lockett caught 44 passes for 687 yards and 4 touchdowns while averaging 32.8 yards per kickoff return, including two touchdowns.

Both receivers are diminutive, Smith checking in at 5-7 and Lockett at 5-11. Both are dangerous with the ball in their hands, whether on offense or special teams. Both made the Second Team last season in their respective All-Conference Teams. Both are no doubt hoping to start out the season with a bang and are no doubt capable of doing so.

Edge: Lockett. Lockett has shown that he is a truly dangerous threat against any and all competition, and has been doing so since his freshman season, while Smith has only started 20 of the 44 games he has played in for his career. Lockett's long-term consistency gives him a solid edge on Smith.

Spencer Low is a senior in political science. Please contact sports@k-statecollegian.com.

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Games of the Week: Week 1

Mike Stanton
managing editor

The 2013 NCAA football season kicks off this weekend. Here are the games you won't want to miss:



North Dakota State at Kansas State
7:30 p.m., Friday, Fox Sports One

Your hometown Wildcats will kick off their Big 12 title defense under the lights of the brand new West Stadium Center this Friday night against North Dakota State. The Bison are coming off a 14-1 season in which they won the NCAA FCS National Championship. Junior Jake Waters, a transfer from Iowa Western, will start at quarterback for the Wildcats.



No. 20 TCU vs. No. 12 LSU
8 p.m., Saturday, ESPN

Expectations are high for TCU in their second season in the Big 12. Senior cornerback Jason Verrett and sophomore defensive end Devonte Fields anchor one of the strongest defenses in the conference, and senior quarterback Casey Pachall's return from a dismissal gives the Horned Frogs a boost on offense. They'll have a tough test in their opener against the LSU Tigers at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. Coming off a 10-3 season in the SEC, which has produced the last seven national championship winners, the Tigers will not go down easy.



Mississippi State vs. No. 13 Oklahoma State
2:30 p.m., Saturday, ABC

The Oklahoma State Cowboys are the preseason favorite to win the Big 12, but before they begin conference play, they'll have to get past Mississippi State. The Bulldogs, who went 8-5 last season, aren't exactly the cream of the crop in the SEC, but they'll be eager to prove their hot start last season was less of a fluke than their 1-5 stretch to close the year.



No. 5 Georgia at No. 8 Clemson
7 p.m., Saturday, ABC

This is undoubtedly the marquee matchup of the weekend, featuring two programs with legitimate national championship aspirations. Clemson capped off an 11-2 season last year with a 25-24 victory over LSU in the Chick-fil-A Bowl, and senior quarterback Tajh Boyd is an early favorite for the Heisman Trophy. Georgia was a heartbreaking 4-point loss to eventual champion Alabama away from playing for last year's title, and quarterback Aaron Murray decided to return for his senior year rather than enter the NFL Draft.



No. 1 Alabama vs. Virginia Tech
4:30 p.m., Saturday, ESPN

The two-time defending national champions are back in action, and for Alabama head coach Nick Saban and the Crimson Tide, anything less than a crystal trophy at the end of the season is a failure. For the Virginia Tech, who finished 7-6 last year, the opportunity to knock the best team in the game from their throne should provide plenty of motivation. It's hard to imagine a scenario where the Hokies beat the Tide, but an upset of that caliber would be an incredible way to start the season.



Louisiana-Lafayette at Arkansas
3 p.m., Saturday, ESPN3

If a mascot name like the Ragin' Cajuns isn't enough incentive to tune into Louisiana-Lafayette's opener, the fact that they play K-State in the second week of the season should be. The Cajuns were a respectable 9-4 last season, and gave the #6 Florida Gators all they could handle in a close road loss in November. Arkansas, on the other hand, is looking to bounce back from a disappointing 4-8 record last year under the guidance of first-year head coach Bret Bielema. The Razorbacks won't get many easy wins in the SEC, so their nonconference games will be key if they hope to be eligible for a bowl after the season.

Volleyball team opens season at UNLV Invitational

David Embers
staff writer

On Friday the K-State Volleyball team will travel to Las Vegas to participate in the UNLV Invitational. The Wildcats will kick off their season with Portland on Aug. 30 at 6 p.m. CT. They will then finish out the round-robin tournament on Saturday with Cal State Fullerton at 12 p.m. CT and UNLV at 9 p.m. CT. All three matches will be held at Cox Pavilion, and should help K-State head coach Suzie Fritz identify the strengths and weaknesses of her squad. Here's a preview of the four schools competing in the UNLV Invitational:

K-State Wildcats

K-State is hoping to replace four seniors from last year's team that finished 21-9 and earned a bid to the NCAA Tournament. While a large chunk of the Wildcat offense has departed, including 1st Team All-Big 12 setter Caitlyn Donahue, K-State returns six seniors that all played valuable roles on last year's squad. Senior middle blocker Kaitlynn Pleger, who hit .317 with 361 kills last season, will lead the Wildcats. Pleger was an All-Big 12 selection last year, and was a unanimous preseason selection this year. She is joined on the front line by seniors Lilla Porubek and Courtney Traxson. Porubek finished 10th in the Big 12 with 2.79 kills per

set, and Traxson posted three matches with 10 or more kills in Big 12 play.

Defensively, Manhattan native and senior Tristan McCarty will anchor the Wildcats. The defensive specialist and libero played in all 103 matches for K-State last year, and set a career high with 238 digs.

Keep an eye out for redshirt freshman setter Katie Brand. Brand, a native of Grand Island, Nebraska, was tabbed the Pre-season Big 12 Co-Freshman of the Year. Brand will become the first setter to start as a freshman for the Wildcats since Abby Fay in 2008.

While the Wildcats are working in a new setter for the first time in three years, the K-State coaching staff hopes the team's

trip to Russia this summer helped expedite the process. Over the course of the twelve-day trip, the Wildcats played six matches against Professional and Olympic level competition. The trip afforded the Wildcats extra practice time and matches that could become invaluable as they move forward in the season.

See www.kstatecollegian.com for more of the volleyball story and more sports coverage

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